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# Media Release

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## **Transportation Secretary Mineta Hears Southland Priorities At Regional Forum**

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**Nation's Top Transportation Official Provides Local Leaders  
With Guidance For Upcoming Congressional Debate**

**CARSON, CA** – More than 170 transportation leaders from across Southern California convened today for a unique regional forum with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta as Congress and the Bush Administration prepare to develop the new comprehensive federal transportation measure known as the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-3). The Regional Transportation Forum was co-sponsored by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald, the area's primary representative on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee which will consider TEA-3 next year. Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, Los Angeles City Councilman and SCAG President Hal Bernson, Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill, Orange County Supervisor Todd Spitzer, Barstow Mayor Lawrence Dale, Temecula Mayor Ron Roberts, and a host of local elected officials and transportation leaders participated in the forum. Debate over the provisions of TEA-3 is expected to begin in earnest early next year.

"There is no question that good transportation is vital to California's economic prosperity," Mineta told the audience of transportation leaders. "President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and I look forward to working with the leaders of California to ensure that our transportation system will support a strong economy, not only in the Golden State, but throughout this great nation."

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## ***Regional Transportation Forum***

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“With this unique forum, we have brought together Southern California’s transportation leaders to provide Secretary Mineta with the opportunity to hear more about the many transportation challenges our region faces, as well as the opportunities to address those challenges if adequate funding is available,” remarked Congresswoman Millender-McDonald. “We believe the Secretary appreciates the level of seriousness and urgency that our region faces in terms of addressing these key transportation priorities.”

Local and regional transportation planners stressed the impact of an efficient Southern California transportation infrastructure on the health of the national economy and the need for California’s transportation funding in TEA-3 to match its share of the total national population and its transportation use.

“Southern California is a region with numerous transportation challenges,” said Los Angeles City Councilman Hal Bernson, who is also the president of SCAG and the chairman of Metrolink. “We ask the federal government to provide resources to Southern California in light of the significant benefits to the country the region provides.”

“We look forward to working with Washington to ensure that the Southern California region can address the pressing demands put on it whether it be relieving overall congestion, improving the movement of goods, or meeting transportation needs in an environmentally sensitive manner,” said Mark Pisano, SCAG executive director.

Commissioners and executive directors from the Southland’s county transportation commissions (i.e., Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission; San Bernardino Associated Governments; Ventura County Transportation Commission) each presented their major priorities to the nation’s top transportation official. Secretary Mineta and Congresswoman Millender-McDonald also heard presentations from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the Metrolink commuter rail system. SCAG also presented several regional priorities to the federal leaders, including the importance of supporting such goods movement-related investments as dedicated truck lanes on key freeways.

The counties each identified specific priorities for Secretary Mineta’s consideration, including:

- *San Bernardino County* asked for support for the freight transit programs within its region, including specifically dedicated and separated truck lanes; rail and road grade separations as part of the Alameda Corridor East program; and freeway interchange improvements.

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- *Riverside County* sought federal support for the transportation recommendations that came from its Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process (CETAP), which specified the need for constructing four new transportation corridors, one to Orange County, one to San Bernardino, and two within the county, all conceived while maintaining federal environmental, transportation and community housing guidelines. The corridors would better link the county's population with job-rich regions.
- *Orange County* asked for its fair share of transportation funding as part of the TEA-3 funding, stressing the region's rapidly escalating population density and the low cost of establishing mass transit in the region now rather than later. Specifically, Orange County requested a total of \$2.4 billion in transportation funding including "high priority projects" such as: \$250 million for State Route (SR) 91; \$50 million for the Ortega Highway interchange; \$120 million for the Interstate (I) 405; \$250 million for the I-5 / SR-57/ SR-22 Interchange; \$70 million for the I-5 Far South Corridor; \$86 million for Bristol Street right-of-way; and \$13 million for Fullerton parking/revitalization.
- *Ventura County* requested that federal lawmakers maintain the guaranteed funding levels established in TEA-21, as well as the flexible funding, and look to innovative solutions to the transportation congestion facing the region. The county also detailed funding for specific projects, including: intermodal access improvements for the Port of Hueneme; restoring the structural integrity of the historic Piru Creek Railroad Bridge; and fiber optic cable installation for its communications systems in order to better communicate with the public in emergencies and natural disasters.
- *Los Angeles County*, at Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke's urging, requested funding to extend light rail to Exposition Park and asked that \$157 million of unused TEA-21 funds be re-appropriated for the Red Line extension from Western to Fairfax that it was originally intended for. Additionally, Councilman Hal Bernson requested that Southern California receive its fair share of TEA-3 funding for new projects, specifically asking for continued funding for such bus transit projects as the Bus Rapid Transit program and \$912 million in funding for Eastside rail.